

CHAPTER IX

RECAPITULATION

ACCORDING to the conclusions at which we have arrived a living creature may be defined more appropriately by its impulses than by its organs : its organs are, in fact, the products of its impulses. We do not see because we have eyes, but we have eyes because we have an impulse to see. This statement may appear paradoxical at first sight, but on further consideration its truth becomes self-evident: for how, indeed, could a minute fragment of protoplasm develop an eye unless there was within it an impulse to do so, or unless it was constrained by an impulse from outside ? An organ which is not animated by an impulse degenerates into a useless survival, like the rudiments of hind limbs in the whale or the muscles by which man once moved his ears. But an impulse needs no organ in order to manifest itself. The primitive forms of life can appreciate light without eyes, and can feel and recognize their food without sensory organs; and we have seen that from less humble ranks of the animal kingdom illustrations can be drawn of the discharge of functions that ordinarily appertain to special organs, by the unspecialized vitality of the body as a whole. We must etherialize our conceptions of Life as we have begun to etherialize our conceptions of Matter: we must regard it, not as a series of activities that are produced by a particular type of substance or

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